

DISPLACEMENT AND PEOPLE'S MOVEMENT: A STUDY OF UAIL PROJECT IN ODISHA

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ABSTRACT

Battling industrialisation, big dams and other similar development projects are a range of micro-level social movements, which contemporary India is evidencing. India's vast organizations with common aspects demonstrates different stresses and road maps. In India, regarding the usage of natural resources, social justice issues and violation of human rights, the micro-level social movements had to face a wide stretch of battles and wars. In India, the environmental movement led to production, extraction, ownership and control of natural resources. Although the development process demonstrated progress in Odisha, it has caused large-scale dispossession of land, homesteads, forests and denial of livelihood and human rights. With the increase in development in Odisha, the controversy among the state/corporate entities and the people builds up as the contemporary growth model is not defensible and results in irreversible ecological/environmental costs, causing the movement of several population. In rural Odisha, battles had impact on proactively stopping of projects, mining, forcible land, forest and water acquisition fallouts from government/corporate sector. This paper studies the process and underlying dynamics of the UAIL fight in Kashipur block. This also explores the tribal movement against the mining industry and also debate a case of conflict over the issue of land acquisition due to the UAIL project in Kashipur block of Odisha. Based on the environmental movement and development-induced displacement perspective, the article studies the nature and extent of displacement due to the UAIL project in Kashipur block and loss of livelihood caused by the project in addition to destruction of adivasi people.

KEYWORDS: Contemporary India, Environmental Movement, Odisha, Livelihood and Human Rights, People's Movement, UAIL Project & Conflict

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INTRODUCTION

'Come, come mother and sister,
Become unity, roar our united voice.
Send back Indal, Tata, Hydro.
To save Orissa, save Adivasi and Dalit.
The earth is ours, it is our right.'

– An Oriya protest song by Bhagaban Majhi, Kucheipada

Independent development of an Indian state is an integral and non-negotiable part of the modernizing agenda, encompassing not only industrial economy but also simultaneously a programme of social transformation and political democratization. It has been marked by the process of development in general and economic transformation in particular in India from the history of last two decades. The last two decades have witnessed a

major change in the nature and process of development activities in Odisha. The road map and implementation of development projects (including dams, power, mining, and industrial and allied with infrastructures, transport network, and commercial forestry) in a state like Odisha is very crucial because an overwhelming majority of the population lives in rural areas and endure chronic poverty, widespread unemployment, subsistence production, and poor basic facilities. This can be achieved only with effective planning and implementation. However, in Odisha, these development projects caused adverse effects, that is, displacement of people from their traditional homeland, denying them their basic livelihood rights (Velath 2009) and destroying the environment, causing wide spread resistance among the rural people. In the social science literature many movements like Chipko or Narmada Bachao Andolon have been well documented. It involved many localised movements that are lesser known, which have either remained unexplored or explained as social conflicts, rather than as environmental movements.

This present is about understanding one such movement that occurred in the Kashipur block of Rayagada district in Odisha. In India, the 'UAIL struggle' involves a movement for construction of a mining industry in Hadiguda panchayat of Kashipur block in Odisha.

Consisting of both primary and secondary data sources, the paper also includes in-depth interviews and discussions with (a) key individuals from local villages that were project affected and villages that were displaced due to UAIL project and who were associated with the movement both directly and indirectly, (b) members from different organisations that spearheaded the movement. In addition to my work in which the villages were the movement's locale, several reports on the UAIL struggle were consulted to gain an insight into the movement's history.

DISPLACEMENT AND PEOPLE'S MOVEMENT IN ODISHA: AN OVERVIEW

After Independence, India's dream was to achieve rapid economic growth and attain self-sufficiency in all areas, where in industrialism and large-scale development projects were considered symbols of progress in the twentieth century. Development consisted of both major and mega projects including dams. Large-scale construction projects involved land acquisition, causing displacement of villages, which the critics have referred to as anti-project, anti-development, anti-national and democratic activities.

Upcoming of various industries forces people into new physical and alien settings, functioning on unfamiliar lines; therefore, they face a structural disadvantage, with little educational, cultural or financial capital. One most outstanding study on involuntary displacement and its socio-economic impacts (Cernea, Impoverishment Risks and Reconstruction Model) has found that displacement has many impacts that cause social exclusion of certain groups, culminating in physical exclusion from a geographic territory, and economic and social exclusion from a set of functioning social networks. Therefore, these risks are landlessness, joblessness, homelessness, marginalisation, food insecurity, increased morbidity, loss of common resources and social disarticulation which in turn leads to the loss of socio-cultural flexibility.

Displaced population also undergo many traumatic psychological and socio-cultural aftereffect, as they are deprived of their political power to decide where and how to live, their livelihood, leading to a tremendous loss of resources. Articulating a conceptual *Impoverishment Risk and Reconstruction Model*, Michael Cernea argues that the displacees are exposed to 'a range of interrelated impoverishment risks, which hit them all at once and which simultaneously deprive them of economic, cultural and social resources in a manner which makes recovery very difficult to

achieve unless these risks are deliberately anticipated and counteracted even before resettlement takes place' (Cernea, 2000). Various tribal groups in Odisha have been opposing industry development plans as that will deprive them of their land and livelihood. However, the voices of the poor people are not heard as the political and state machineries are excited about climbing development ladder, especially in the mining sector.

The development activities began in Odisha in the late 1940s, which gained momentum with the introduction of the Pradeep Port plan in the early 50s. The major development projects in the state are the Rourkela Steel Plant, the Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL) and the National Aluminum Company (NALCO); multipurpose dam projects like Hirakud, Rengali; Upper Kolab, Upper Indervati, Balimela, thermal project like Talcher Thermal Power Station, Ib Thermal Power Project and Talcher Super Power Project, and the coal mining projects in the Talcher and Ib valley coal mining areas. The state encouraged private and foreign direct investments. In the last five years, the state government signed 43 memorandums of understanding (MoUs). Notable among them are POSCO (Korea), Vedanta Aluminum (UK), Rio Tinto (UK), BHP Billiton (UK-Australia), Alcan (Canada), Hindalco, Jindal, Tata and Sterlite. Mining projects worth Rs. 3,000 billion have already been launched and projects worth a further Rs. 11,000 billion are in the pipeline. Therefore, Odisha is fast emerging as a huge site for multinational development projects, depriving the rights of the indigenous population (Sahoo 2005).

Development has been both mantra and myth, as thousands of cores of rupees have been ploughed into millions of projects, while the promise of employment and prosperity has remained elusive. For 85 percent of its people agriculture being the source of income, with no priority for employment. The villagers are facing extreme poverty and are neglected with regard to the economic sphere. Odisha is one of the India's poorest state, whose poverty was 46 percent in 2004. Between 1980 and 2000, 26,500 hectares of forest land were destroyed for various projects, making these population ecological refugees, victims of strategy growth, but the rest of them reaped the fruits (Fernandes 2005).

In mineral reserves, Odisha is one of the richest states in the country because Odisha possesses the world's best deposits of bauxite used in aluminium production while constructing dams to provide electricity. Now companies are planning to exploit the mountain ranges in this region. For adivasis, many of these mountain ranges are attached with complex sacred meanings and are also the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN)-defined biodiversity hotspots. The inland areas in the western Odisha form a colony of the coast. From this coast, hundreds of thousands of people, mostly adivasis, have been forcibly removed to enable dam-building and mining/industrial development since 1945. These movements succeeded in the failure of the Odisha state by redistributing the land rights to over sixty per cent of the region. The Hos, Kols, Kharias and Mundas comprise the main labour force. Though, this region is agriculturally poor, it is known for surplus labour and the poor wage structure and the workers are ruthlessly exploited.

In 2007-08 and 2011-12, the quantity of rice produced in Odisha fell by almost one-fourth. Though in 2012-13, the government claimed a 16.11% growth rate in the agriculture sector, but its mineral value tripled (Satapathy 2013). From Anandpur Bhagirathi Sathy in 2009-10, member of the Legislative Assembly (MLA) had written a letter to the state steel and mines minister pointing out that while the state's own revenue stood at Rs 12,000 crore, the total annual earnings of around 300 mining lessees was Rs 15,000 crore. He highlighted that out 138 iron ore and 42 manganese mines that produced 79.37 million tonnes and 0.68 million tonnes of iron ore and manganese, respectively by the state government leased. "While the owners sold the ore at prices ranging from Rs 3,000 to Rs 16,000, the government received only a pittance like Rs 27 per ton as royalty" and an equally small amount as sales tax (Satapathy 2011).

As of 2012, land acquisition and alienation for MoUs- based projects in acres (Table- 1).

Table 1

Industry	Requirement as Per MOU/ IPICOL's Appraisal	Extent of land applied for
Steel	58,004	50,084
Power	26,555	20,371
Aluminium	12,3555	12,419
Downstream Park	3,572	1,864
Oil Refinery	3,352	3,352
Port	3,294	3,294
Coal Mining	2,684	2,682
Railway Siding	1,661	2,682
Other than Steel and Aluminium	1,043	757
Auto Ancillary	340	541
Water Corridor	54	51
Coal Conveyer	10	9
ITC Project	0	5
Total	1,12,923	95,746
Non- MOU Steel	46,676	48,905
Non MOU Railway Siding	231	191
Non MOU Port	0	3,494
Total	46,907	49,096
Grand Total	1,59,830	1,44,842

Source: B. Mishra and S. Mishra, 2014

Resisting Private Capital Investments in Odisha

In Odisha, the large-scale displacement of people and destruction of the environment occurred due to mines and other large industrial projects, leading to widespread impact like Kashipur, Chilika, Niyamgiri, Kalinganagar, and anti POSCO movements. In Odisha the movements against extraction draw from a legacy of resistance movements against authority. A number of resistance movements emerged against displacement by state development projects such as dams, defence projects, and public sector industries before the 1990s (Pandey 1998). In the 1950s movements against displacement by the Hirakud dam and later dam projects such as the Kolab, Balimela, Rengali and Indrawati. Similar mobilisations of local people also occurred against large industrial projects, including the Rourkela steel plant, in Koraput the National Aluminium Company (Nalco) and Hindustan Aeronautics (HAL) plants, and in Talcher- Angul region the Nalco's aluminium smelter and thermal power plants (ibid). Since these displacements were seen as a part of the development initiatives of the state, they had a legitimacy to overcome this difficult. In the 1980s two movements, the Gandhamardan and Baliapal struggles, were able to achieve their aims of stalling large projects and have become models for grass-roots mobilisations against displacement (Kumar, 2014). A brief Overview of Important Movements against Extraction in Odisha discussed below (Table-2).

Table 2

Movement	Movement Base	Main Issues	Repertoires of Contention	External Support Networks
Chilika Bachao Andolon against tatas prawn local communities project (1991-93)	Fishermen and other local communities	Against prawn project by tatas in chilika lake, loss of livelihood.	Rallies, demonstrations	Student groups from Utkal University, environmental group
Gopalpur Andolan against land acquisition for tata steel plant (1995-98)	Small Peasantry	Against land acquisition, loss of livelihood; loss of way of life; destruction of Kewra (extract from pandanus flower) based economy	Blockades, non-cooperation rallies	Communist party of India, environment and social activist of Odisha and beyond
Kashipur movement against bauxite mining and refinery (1994-2008-now)	Tribal Peasantry	Displacement; loss of land, livelihood and way of life; environmental destruction	Rallies, demonstrations occasional blockades	Activist networks in Odisha and in Delhi, local NGO, international support groups in Norway and Canada
Niyamgiri movement against bauxite mining and refinery (2003-now)	Dongariakonds, tribal and dalit peasantry in refinery area	Displacement; loss of livelihood; environmental pollution; mining of sacred niyamgiri; potential impact on Vamsadhara	Rallies, demonstrations; occasional blockades, religious events, legal action	CPI-ML (New Democracy), samajwadi, janparisad, Green Kalahandi, Odisha and delhi based activists networks, conservationist networks, supreme court lawyers, international organisations (survival international, Action Aid) and networks, international celebrities, UK based activists
Narayanpatna movement against land alienation and exploitation by non tribals (2006-now)	Tribal peasantry and landless	Alienation of land by non-tribal landlords, exploitation of tribals against mining by companies	Taking back land, rallies and demonstrations, meetings	CPI-ML (GananthPatra Group), activist groups in Odisha and outside
Kalinganagar movement against displacement for industrial estate (2005- ongoing), mainly Tatas' kalinganagar Steel plant	Tribal small peasantry	Displacement due to industries; protect land and livelihood; jusice for the killing of 13 tribals in 2006 firing	Major blockade of a highway; martyrs' day in remembrance of people killed in police firing, demonstration, rallies	Activists groups in Odisha and outside CPI-ML (New Democracy).

Source: Kumar, 2014

The Bauxite Rush and UAIL Movement: The Genesis of the Movement

The flat-topped mountains of the Eastern Ghats is bauxite rich, which attracted many powerful aluminium multinationals (Padel and Das 2010). The bauxite deposits on mountain top are sources of perennial springs providing

water supply for the survival and subsistence for the Kondh, Paroja and Jhodia tribes. In the cosmologies of the local tribal communities, the mountain tops are also sacred. In Odisha the public sector Nalco's mine on Panchapatmali and its alumina refinery before 1990s in Damajodi were the only aluminium-related projects. In 1994 the first private project was initiated by Utkal Alumina International Ltd (UAIL) in Kashipur block, a consortium of Indian and MNCs, to mine bauxite from the Baphlamali mountain and process it in an alumina refinery. In the fertile Doraguda valley the alumina refinery was to be and 24 villages, it would fully or partially displace whereas the mines would affect 42 villages (PUDR 2005). On the grounds of displacement, livelihoods, and the environment a strong resistance movement developed against the project.

Land acquisition, employment opportunity and environmental pollution these three issues were the main issues due to which the conflict started. People tried their level best not to establish the UAIL project in Kashipur area. But, they failed in their attempt. On November 11th of 1993 they went to meet the chief minister. The then chief minister (Mr Bijupattnaik) wanted to know about the implications of mining on local communities. Based on his understanding, the people from Kuchipader and Doraguda were informed their losing a small amount of land for which the people showed their strong objections (Goodland, 2007). On December 1, 1993, an eight-member team met the Chief Minister, Late Biju Pattnaik and demanded cancellation of the proposed company, UAIL. Later on, the villagers of Kucheipadar snatched away instruments of one survey team and set their camp on fire in December 1994. Police arrested leaders of people namely Maharaj Majhi and Gurunatha Majhi of kuchipader on April 23, 1995. In June 1996, the local administration forced people to sign and to give their land for the UAIL. On February 14, 1996 a gathering of more than 10,000 people in Kuchipader launched an organisation in the name of Prakrutik Sampad Surakshya Parishad (PSSP). With the help of (PSSP) a public meeting and demonstration was organised by ten thousand tribals in Tikiri in front of the UAIL office, protesting against the mining project. (Das and Das, 2006)

During the latter part of the protest met with violent repercussions from the state be it the police force, or the goons employed by the mining companies. The most unpardonable incidence was police firing on adivasis in Maikanch village of Kashipur block on 16 December 2000, killing three protestors, permanently disabling six and seriously injuring thirty. On the Maikanch road, the people had put up a barricade as part of their resistance against the alumina project, which prevented political leaders from 'multi-stakeholder dialogue' organized by the company at Nuagaon village day before the massacre. By handpicking representatives of various pro-project electioneering parties, UAIL and CARE International (a corporate-funded NGO) formed All Party Committee. The local people forced these pro-project leaders to return to the district headquarters Rayagada, causing firing as a consequence of this action.

The firing resulted in mass uproar against the project, with the National Centre for Advocacy Studies (NCAS) sending an "Urgent Action Alert" to human rights organisations the world over urging them "to write to all the concerned authorities in Orissa to take necessary steps to protect the lives of activists as well as Adivasis involved in the struggle to safeguard their lives and dignity." Four years later, in December 2004, another brutal attack on people's demonstration at village D-Karol, the proposed alumina plant site of Utkal Alumina International Limited (UAIL) at Doraguda, by the Rayagada District Collector P. K. Mehrda and the district Superintendent of Police Sanjaya Kumar. More than 300 protesting adivasis and dalits were exposed to rape threats, abuses, tear gas shells and an aggressive lathi charge, where 16 persons, comprising mainly women, were seriously injured in the unprovoked attack by the government. Many such brutal attacks happened over the years, with CRPF, other paramilitary forces and local goons raided and attached the villagers (See Goodland, 2007).

In October 2006, a multidisciplinary panel of the Indian People's Tribunal headed by Justice S. N. Bhargava (Retd.) consisting of eight members enquired into alleged human rights and environment violations by UAIL whose adverse environmental and health effects are affecting water sources and contamination of agricultural land by toxic wastes, grasslands and destruction of forest land, and air pollution caused by the release of cancerous gases, creating a health hazard for those inhabiting in and around the alumina refinery. Taking into account the testimonies of the local tribals who were affected by the project and the experts and the responses by various ministries to letters sent under the Right to Information Act, the panel ordered the immediate abandon of the UAIL project by the Government of Orissa. The Panel heard the voices of the local people, the overwhelming majority of whom are Scheduled tribes and also was updated about the brutal attacks that they had to undergo.. Despite the claim of the Government of Orissa and UAIL that the project will provide growth of the villages and also job opportunities, the panel concluded that the local Adivasi communities will not see any economic benefits from the project.. The Norwegian company Norsk Hydro ASA immediately withdrew from the Utkal project (on December 17, 2000), after the firing incident at Maikanch, on December 16, 2000, which was soon followed by TATA. Norsk Hydro was a 45% shareholder in UAIL, with Alcan holding 35%, and Hindustan Aluminium Co. Ltd. (Hindalco), the remaining 20%. This withdrawals gave a chance for Hindalco and Alcan to hold 55% and 45%, respectively, of the UAIL shares, which Alcan finally sold off in 2007. Therefore, UAIL had 100 percent subsidiary of Hindalco.

For a long time, Odisha has been facing multiple conflicts and social movements. When the people of Kashipur heard about the success of the protest against BALCO and the leaders of Gandhamardan Surakhya Samiti, they got the inspiration to keep the struggle alive (Naik, 2012). By December 2012, when 90 % of the construction was completed despite people's protest, and the UAIL was optimistic that its trail production could start from April 1, 2013, with the pre-commissioning trail in February, the tribals still hadn't given up. They gathered on the anniversary of the Maikanch killing to protest. Amidst opposition from the inhabitants of around 20 villages near the plant, the refinery finally started the trail production in June 2013. The protest was against the utilization of water from river Gada, which was used for irrigation and other purpose by the local tribals of at least 200 villages. They company officials also denied the memorandum to Rayagada collector, Sashi Bhusan Padhi for the intervention of district administration.

For the fiscal year 2016-17 the company had projected output of 1.5 million tones which it mainly exports to West Asian countries. The refinery is currently running at its full design capacity and has cemented its position as one of the lowest cost refineries of the world. "Utkal today is a world class asset and our captive alumina bagged by captive bauxite is proving to be a great strength." Satish Pai, managing director, Hindalco Industries said during a conference in February, 2017 said "We believe that operational improvements ensure that better performance will be sustained in the coming quarters". The present scenario of UAIL people's struggle can be termed as "an unfinished struggle with partial success." Outrage over the killings, alongside effective mobilisation by sympathetic groups in Norway, forced Norsk-Hydro to withdraw from the project. In 2007, Alcan withdrew due to pressure generated by groups in Canada in 2007, leaving the Birlas holding all the shares in UAIL. In spite of the curb, the movement continued and intensified (PUDR 2005; Sarangi et al 2005), thereby taking possession of most of the land. In 2013, the mine and the alumina refinery began its operation.

CONCLUSIONS

In Odisha the movements against extractive industrialisation represent genuine democratic demands for citizenship and justice. The internal dynamics of this movement mirror the class and caste differences and the multiple relationships of power, including gendered power, within Indian societies and deserve greater study and attention. The anti-extraction movements and their leaderships have endured immense hardships. In Odisha there is little reason to hope that the juggernaut of extraction will be stopped because of the actions of a few thousand people. The movements are engaged in a David versus Goliath battle, hoping against all odds to survive with dignity. This dogged resistance to global capital and a neo-liberal state, combined with the ability to synthesise social justice with ecological concerns, make the movements in Odisha significant to all global struggles against extractive capital (Kumar, 2014). The UAIL conflict also reflects the battle between the eco-system people, that is, the displaced people (DPs) and the project affected people (PAP), and the omnivores, such as the private contractors engaged in UAIL construction work and the state.

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